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Berlin, N. Y., July 1st, 1872.

6015

AN HONEST BRIDEGROOM.

BY PAUL FLANE.

It was a damp, misty evening in No-
vember, when the light was fast merging
into gray shadows, that John Gentry
walked wearily along the outskirts of the
city toward his home, situated almost at
the extreme end of the road.

John Gentry was the son of a deceased
merchant who died insolvent. His moth-
er being wholly dependent upon him for
support, a former friend of his father,
when in a charitable humor, had taken
him into his employ, where for five years,
at a salary of three hundred dollars the
young man had toiled uncomplainingly
from six in the morning until eight or
nine o'clock in the evening, in order to
provide his mother the bare necessities
of life. Mrs. Gentry, whose health was
poor, would fain have tried her needle to
lighten the burden upon her son, but he
positively forbade her doing so, knowing
that her strength would not admit of any
such undertaking. The poor woman kept
up a shadow of light-heartedness and
contentment when her son was present;
prayers and tears were more frequently
known to her when she was alone in her
cottage.

Her quick ear detected the footstep of
her son as he approached the house, and
she quickly arose from her chair and be-
gan to busy herself about the table which
was ready spread for supper. John
placed his hand upon the latch and enter-
ed.

Well, mother, he said, preferring to
break the news at once, rather than keep
her in even a momentary suspense, I have
failed. Mr. Sims declines to advance my
pay, and we must still try and make three
hundred do the work of five hundred dol-
lars.

The widow would fain have stifled the
sigh that escaped, but it passed her lips
ere she was aware of it.

I am sorry, she replied, but we must
not complain. God knows what is best
for us, my son, and let us devoutly thank
him for that which He bestows.

What have you got for supper? asked
her son, glad to banish the subject of
their poverty.

I have made some nice toast, she re-
plied, and a good cup of strong tea.

John fumbled in his pocket-book which
contained only a shilling.

I think I'd like a little cheese, he said.

I'll be back in a moment, mother, and he
left the cottage.

Procuring the cheese, he was returning
when his foot struck something that
bounced before him like a ball. He
paused and peered into the darkness, but
could see nothing. Then recollecting that
he had some matches in his pocket, he
placed several together, and lighting them
commenced to grope along the ground.

In a moment he discovered the object of
his search, and he fairly fainted as he
grasped it. A heavy roll of bank bills
tied with a piece of red tape.

He glanced quickly about him, and
holding the treasure tightly in his hands,
he flew wildly into his mother's pres-
ence.

Hush! he cried, looking toward the
windows, Close the shutters; be quick,
mother.

The widow turned pale as she obeyed.

What has happened, John? she asked
with a faltering accent.

Nothing but what is good, mother, re-
plied her son in a low voice, as he depos-
ited the roll of notes on the table.

Where did you obtain that money? cried
Mrs. Gentry, gasping for breath.

Not so loud, mother, replied John, I
found it in the street as I returned from
the store.

It is not ours, answered the widow;

to-morrow's paper will contain an adver-

tisement for its recovery.

Doubtless, replied her son, but there
will be a reward, mother, and I'm en-
titled to it, and will accept it, too. But
let us see what the amount is? and his
fingers, accustomed to counting money,
nimblely glided over the notes.

Five thousand dollars, mother. That's
a snug sum if it only belonged to us. Just
think of it!

I would sooner not think of it, my son.

Some person may have lost that roll of
bills which will be plunged in despair and
ruin if it is not recovered.

John Gentry's conscience grew sol-
emn; he had not thought of that.

Let us have supper, he said.

They sat down to the table, but not-
withstanding his most persistent efforts
he could neither eat nor drink.

It's no use, mother, he said pushing
aside his cup and plate. It's no use, my
appetite is all gone.

Neither the widow nor her son slept
much that night. There was a sadness
on the mind of the former that she could
not dispel, while the latter lay wide
awake contemplating the amount of re-
ward that would be offered, and wishing
for the morning to dawn that he might
procure a newspaper.

Long ere it was light John Gentry had
left his bed and was speeding toward a
news-stand. The papers had not arrived;
he had to wait. For a half-hour he wait-
ed and to keep himself warm. At last
they came, and he purchased a copy
of every one issued and hurried home.

His mother was up and stirring, and by
the light of a candle they together pored
over the advertising columns.

The widow was mistaken; there was
no advertisement for the money. John
was disappointed and nervous.

Perhaps it is too soon; to-morrow we
shall see, he said.

Suppose it isn't advertised at all, sug-
gested her son.

Very improbable, replied his mother;

but my dear son, don't allow your mind
to dwell upon such a matter. It is hard-